

# BRFSS Brief

Number 2021-05

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual statewide telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and administered by the New York State Department of Health. The BRFSS is designed to provide information on behaviors, risk factors, and utilization of preventive services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death among the noninstitutionalized, civilian population aged 18 years and older.

## Overweight and Obesity

New York State Adults, 2019

### Introduction and Key Findings

Obesity and overweight together are the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States (US) close behind tobacco use.<sup>1,2</sup> Obesity increases the risk of a range of diseases for adults, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, liver disease, stroke, arthritis, depression, sleep apnea, kidney disease, gallbladder disease, pregnancy complications, and many types of cancer, as well as an overall risk of higher mortality.<sup>3-13</sup> Increasingly, these conditions are being seen in children and adolescents with obesity who are also at greater risk for certain diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and depression.<sup>14-17</sup> Obesity is also associated with impaired immune function<sup>18,19</sup> decreased lung capacity,<sup>20</sup> increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 potentially tripling the risk of hospitalization due to a COVID-19 infection, and as body mass index (BMI) increases, the risk of death from COVID-19 increases.<sup>21,22</sup> Obesity also disproportionately impacts specific racial and ethnic minority groups, including Hispanic and Black non-Hispanic adults who have higher prevalence of obesity<sup>23</sup> and are more likely to experience worse outcomes from COVID-19.<sup>24-27</sup>

Creating community environments, policies, and systems that support healthy food and beverage choices and safe and accessible physical activity opportunities, while also increasing efforts to reduce health disparities and inequities, is a major goal in the effort to prevent and reduce the burden of chronic diseases as part of the New York State Prevention Agenda 2019-2024. Maintaining healthy weight should start in early childhood and continue throughout adulthood.

#### Key Findings

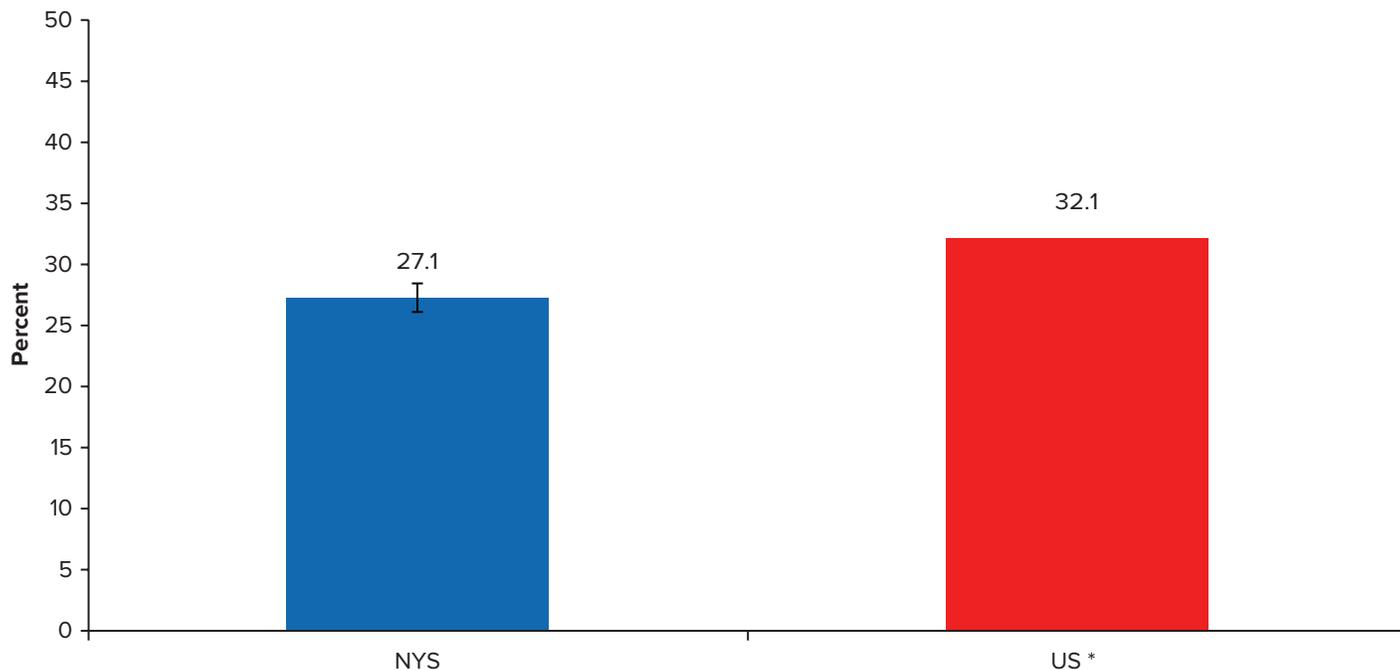
More than one-quarter (27.1%) of adults in New York State (NYS) have obesity and another 36.1% have overweight; these two conditions affect over 8.5 million people in NYS. The prevalence of obesity in NYS is higher among adults who are non-Hispanic black (36.4%), are currently living with disability (37.0%), and are living in the region outside of New York City (29.2%). Obesity is less prevalent among adults who earn an annual household income of at least \$50,000 (25.4%) and among adults with a college degree (20.7%).

### BRFSS questions

1. About how much do you weigh without shoes?
2. About how tall are you without shoes?

Weight and height responses were used to determine body mass index (BMI), calculated as weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters. Respondents were classified as overweight if their BMI was equal to or greater than 25.0, but less than 30.0. They were classified as obese if their BMI was 30.0 or greater.

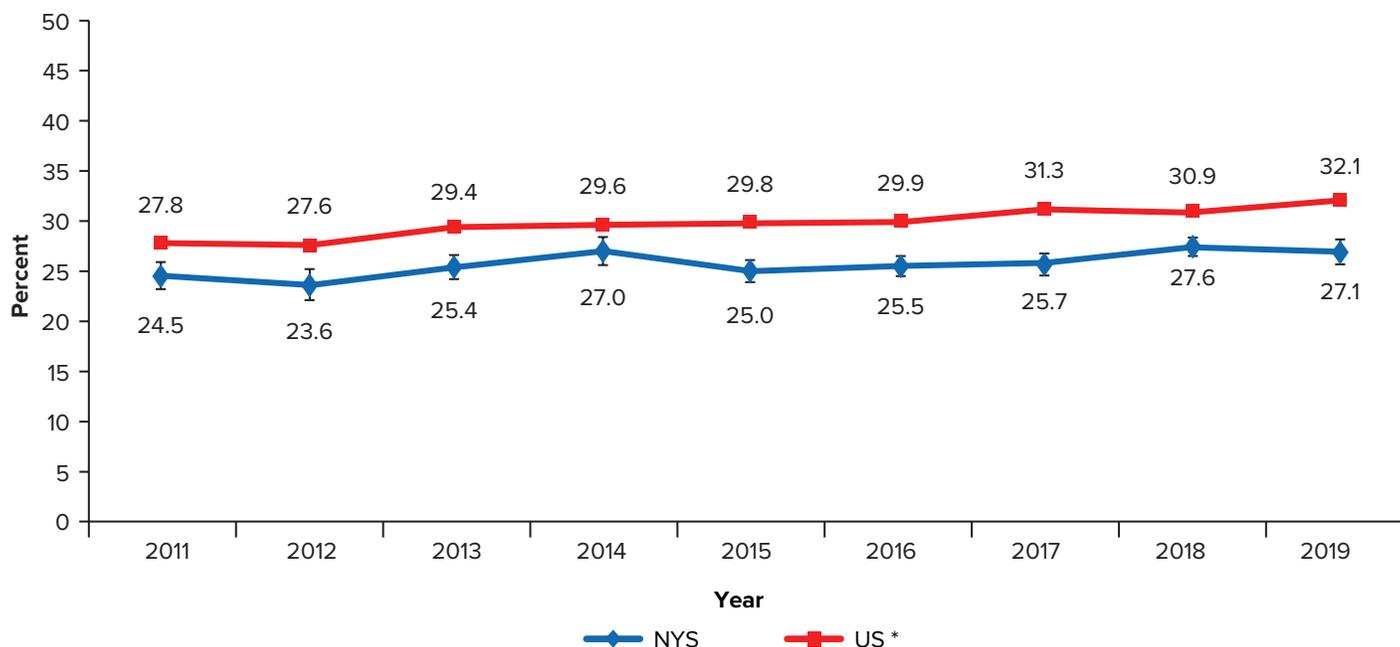
**Figure 1. Obesity among US and New York State adults, BRFSS 2019**



\*Median percent; includes data from 49 states and the District of Columbia

Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

**Figure 2. Prevalence of obesity among US and New York State adults, by BRFSS survey year**



\*Median percent; includes data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia (except 2019, where n=49 states and DC)

Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

## Overweight and obesity<sup>a</sup> among New York State adults, 2019 BRFSS

	Neither overweight nor obese		Overweight <sup>b</sup>		Obese <sup>c</sup>	
	% <sup>d</sup>	95% CI <sup>d</sup>	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
<b>New York State (NYS)</b> [n=14,232]	36.8	35.6 - 38.1	36.1	34.8 - 37.3	27.1	26.0 - 28.2
<b>Sex</b>						
Male	31.9	30.2 - 33.6	41.6	39.8 - 43.4	26.5	24.9 - 28.1
Female	41.8	40.0 - 43.7	30.4	28.7 - 32.2	27.7	26.2 - 29.3
<b>Age (years)</b>						
18-24	58.6	54.0 - 63.3	24.8	20.6 - 28.9	16.6	13.3 - 19.9
25-34	42.9	39.5 - 46.3	34.1	30.9 - 37.3	23.0	20.2 - 25.8
35-44	31.2	28.0 - 34.3	36.7	33.3 - 40.2	32.1	28.8 - 35.4
45-54	28.4	25.6 - 31.2	37.5	34.5 - 40.5	34.1	31.2 - 36.9
55-64	28.1	25.6 - 30.7	39.8	36.9 - 42.7	32.0	29.5 - 34.6
65+	36.0	33.8 - 38.2	39.5	37.2 - 41.7	24.5	22.6 - 26.4
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>						
White non-Hispanic	38.1	36.6 - 39.7	35.5	34.0 - 37.0	26.4	25.1 - 27.7
Black non-Hispanic	29.5	26.0 - 33.1	34.1	30.5 - 37.7	36.4	32.7 - 40.0
Hispanic	30.1	27.1 - 33.1	40.5	37.3 - 43.8	29.3	26.4 - 32.3
Other non-Hispanic	50.1	45.1 - 55.2	33.7	28.8 - 38.6	16.2	12.8 - 19.6
<b>Income</b>						
<\$25,000	33.6	30.9 - 36.3	32.8	30.1 - 35.5	33.6	30.9 - 36.3
\$25,000-\$49,999	31.4	28.5 - 34.3	38.5	35.3 - 41.6	30.2	27.3 - 33.0
\$50,000 and greater	38.0	36.1 - 39.9	36.6	34.8 - 38.5	25.4	23.8 - 27.0
Missing <sup>e</sup>	42.2	39.2 - 45.3	36.2	33.2 - 39.2	21.6	19.2 - 24.0
<b>Educational attainment</b>						
Less than high school (HS)	28.5	24.5 - 32.4	39.9	35.6 - 44.3	31.6	27.6 - 35.6
High school or GED	34.8	32.3 - 37.4	34.2	31.7 - 36.7	31.0	28.6 - 33.3
Some post-HS	34.5	32.0 - 37.1	36.0	33.5 - 38.5	29.4	27.2 - 31.6
College graduate	43.1	41.2 - 45.1	36.2	34.3 - 38.0	20.7	19.2 - 22.2
<b>Disability<sup>f</sup></b>						
Yes	30.6	28.3 - 33.0	32.4	30.0 - 34.7	37.0	34.6 - 39.3
No	39.1	37.6 - 40.7	37.3	35.8 - 38.8	23.6	22.3 - 24.8
<b>Region</b>						
New York City (NYC)	40.0	37.8 - 42.2	35.8	33.7 - 38.0	24.2	22.3 - 26.0
NYS exclusive of NYC	34.6	33.0 - 36.1	36.2	34.8 - 37.7	29.2	27.9 - 30.6

a Based on categories of body mass index (BMI), calculated as weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters

b Overweight, 25.0≤BMI<30.0

c Obese, BMI≥30.0

d % = weighted percentage; CI = confidence interval.

e "Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income.

f All respondents who reported having at least one type of disability (cognitive, mobility, vision, self-care, independent living or deafness)

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## Program Contributions

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